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Statement submitted by Women's Education and Culture Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Women's Education and Culture Foundation (HEKVA), as a local and national non-governmental organization for the empowerment of socio-economically disadvantaged community-especially women and girls, welcomes the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.

We promote self-sufficiency and social integration; enhance capacity to manage economic and social risks of socio-economically disadvantaged women for the advancement of family, children, youth and consequently the society in general. For this purpose, we support the socio-economically disadvantaged communities in-kind and in-cash, perform educational, social and cultural activities and conduct national-international projects for women and youth development since 1988.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation is aware of the importance of unity in all levels of society, especially among non-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organization. With this understanding, we work in cooperation with European Voluntary Service, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policies' General Directorate, the Governorship of Istanbul 'Fight Against Drugs and Addiction' Coordination, Turkey's Non-governmental organisations Child and Youth Platform, Turkey's Non-governmental organisations Turkey Family Platform etc. We also become members of or partner with International Organizations and Foundations to have a global perspective and understanding of the problems as well as a united power to take action. Women's Education and Culture Foundation is amongst the first non-governmental organisations from Turkey to have a Special Consultative Status at ECOSOC (since 2009).

Women's Education and Culture Foundation has the mission to set an example to be a part of the solution. Status of Syrian refugees has been a major issue in Turkey for the recent years. As we see in the Ministry of Interior Directorate General of Migration Management 2018 numbers, "Turkey is... home to the largest refugee population in the world; over 3.1 million Syrians live under temporary protection, almost half of whom (nearly 1.4 million) are children." The Turkish Government has provided all types of social protection and security services to these refugees. Many subject-specific, local, national and international branches of non-governmental organisations in Turkey take an active role in the field to share this burden. As a non-governmental organisation in a developing country, Women's Education and Culture Foundation prioritizes social protection and has provided vocational courses, certificate programs, Turkish Language Courses for Non-Turkish Citizens, Handicraft Workshops, gifts for children; included women in voluntary work to help their social integration; served them food in the Soup Kitchen. Some of the Syrian women showed such a success in learning Turkish, that they provided translation services for the women that do not know Turkish.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation conducted an awareness project titled "You Have Got a Message!" under the auspices of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, on the 62nd Commission of the Status of Women. The aim of the event was to create awareness of the fact that refugees and migrant families, especially women and children, have voices that are not heard and to share their demands, expectations, hopes and thoughts through their own voice. The target group was the participants of the commission. We had a stand outside the official event of our ministry, delivered Syrian Women's and children's handwritten messages translated in English and took the responses from the members of the target group and in return, we presented handmade gifts made by Syrian children that Women's Education and Culture Foundation provided support for. This enabled Women's Education and Culture Foundation to be the voice of these Syrian Women in Turkey.

Women's Education and Culture Foundation is conscious of the importance of education. We "Don't give the fish but teach them to fish" through vocational, educational and developmental courses and support programs such as "Women's Health Trainings" to raise awareness about women health; "Cooking & Baking Certificate Programs" to promote women's self-sufficiency and financial independence; "Career Counseling and Education Center" for women and youth: Psychological Counseling (free of charge), Personal Development Workshops, Handicrafts Workshops; "Weekend Educational Support Programs" for youth; Seminars and Conferences (Fatih Sultan Mehmet University "Addiction Training", etc.), aid (in kind and in cash, scholarship, international aid support, etc.), "Soup Kitchen", "HEKVA Youth" which is a voluntary group of young and idealist women that conducts social responsibility campaigns, cultural activities and seminars.

As stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development "social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure play a critical role in 'transforming our world'". Women play a critical role in sustainable development. They provide a source for their family's consumption and income. Many women and girls work in temporary jobs without any social security and under very inhuman circumstances. Due to their lack of professional efficiency and career orientation, they end up dependent both financially and psychologically. As Women's Education and Culture Foundation we contribute to the solution through educational, social and professional support for women and girls in addition to young boys. We also encourage the United Nations to provide wider sources and sustainable infrastructure to overcome these problems permanently.

All individuals notwithstanding of their gender or place in a State, ought to have equal access to fundamental human rights such as food, education, logistics and health. The empowerment of women and girls through education and professional training would be the long-term investment to the sustainable development and well-being of ali individuals. As mentioned above Women's Education and Culture Foundation plays an active role to achieve these goals and encourages the United Nations commissions and all structures to provide sufficient and satisfying support in the national, local and international level.

Education is a fundamental human right. It directly determines the integration, participation and contribution to the well-being of society. All levels of education is crucial for children, youth and other members of the family to have an equally developed society. Unfortunately, today so many women and girls have limited access or no access even to the basic education. Recognizing this issue, Women's Education and Culture Foundation plays an active role for the education and vocational capability to reach women and girls among the socio-economically disadvantaged community. International and global reports indicate that lack of education is a result of various reasons, the most common of which is the economic reasons. The need to have an income prevents women from getting education. With this sensitivity Women's Education and Culture Foundation also calls for governments to increase women and girls' access to education in order for them to fully participate in their communities and actualize their potential and skills for the well-being of themselves, their families and eventually the whole society. They must also have fair circumstances, abilities and professional qualifications as the ones who raise future generations.

The points and issues mentioned above are the main problems and also directly related to the priority theme of this year's commission. With this in mind, Women's Education and Culture Foundation believes the resolution of these problems in a sustainable and equity-based level would result in the "sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

All in all, Women's Education and Culture Foundation recognizes and puts great emphasis on the social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure and empowerment of women and girls especially in the socio-economically disadvantaged level; takes a step to overcome the problems and be a part of a solution; encourages the United Nations to take necessary actions in a wider and larger scale with a more intensive structure and is ready, happy to provide expected support locally and nationally in Turkey but also in the international and global level.